The merchants and petty aristocracy of Bengal reached a point at which no further economic development was open to them. Many had been ruined by British rule, while a number had through the permanent settlement become land-minded and formed a new landlord class. The rest, finding themselves frustrated, turned to mysticism and later to revolution. Bengal has always been the home of religious sentiment, e.g. the sinister mysteries of the Tantric system and the ecstatic devotion of Chaitanya. But Bengal also was the first province in India to feel the full impact of Western education. I have referred elsewhere to Macaulay's dislike of Indian culture. He believed quite sincerely that before the "brilliant light" of Western philosophy all Indian thought would grow pale and vanish out of existence. "No Hindu," he wrote, "who ever received an English education remains sincerely attached to his religion"—a remark which is largely true, though it has generally meant the loss of the old moorings and a helpless drifting along the waters of scepticism and semi-ignorance, overwhelmed by the sudden impact of Western systems incapable of harmonisation with the existing social conventions. "It is my firm belief," said the dogmatic Macaulay, "that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes of Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any effort to proselytise, without the smallest interference with their religious liberty; merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection."

It has been said that for Macaulay "all religious difficulties in India could be solvfcd by the principles of Whig Latitudinarianism." The early pioneers really felt that this diffusion of Western knowledge would ensure for India "vast moral blessings." For the great missionary pioneers like Duff and Carey, Western education was only a means